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ABSTRACT

One challenge faced by any educational leadership program is how to develop effective entry-level school administrators. Many administrative interns receive no real administrative practice at all through their internship, and yet upon completion of the internship, they are expected to be competent administrators. The internship at Sam Houston State University (SHSU), Texas, is a response to this challenge, offering students a year-long program based on the Texas standards for effective school leaders. The internship requires fulfilling activities, such as school improvement projects and demographic studies of the intern's school area, in which leadership principles are put into practical use. For each activity, the interns must write a summary of how they completed it, attach pertinent documentation, and write a reflection on the activity. All documentation is put into a binder that includes the intern's leadership framework and 5-year goals. The leadership framework contains: (1) philosophy of education; (2) philosophy of leadership; (3) vision for learners; (4) vision for teachers; (5) vision for the organization; (6) vision for professional growth; and (7) method of vision attainment. With this internship, students at SHSU become fully aware of the responsibilities required of school administrators and prepared for the challenges they will face. (Contains 7 references and 4 figures.) (RT)

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Running Head: EFFECTIVE INTERNSHIPS

Effective Internships for Effective New Administrators

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S. EDMONSON

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Effective Internships for Effective New Administrators

One challenge faced by any educational leadership program is how to develop effective entry-level school administrators. Whereas a sequence of coursework focusing on leadership, law, research, special programs, and curriculum is important, a well-developed internship can provide a wealth of opportunities not available within the scope of a traditional classroom setting (Capasso & Daresh, 2001). The internship at Sam Houston State University offers students a year-long program based on the Texas standards for effective school leaders (Texas Education Agency, 1994). A series of required administrative activities designed for building a working knowledge of and actually applying these standards is key to the effectiveness of this program. Students also develop an administrative portfolio that reflects their activities, growth, and understanding. Eight seminars are required of the interns as well, in which they learn more about the administrative process and can speak with other interns about their experiences. Students may enroll in the internship only at the conclusion of their Master's degree, meaning that all interns have the knowledge gained through their administrative coursework to help guide them throughout the administrative internship process. With this program, students also find themselves leaving the internship prepared for the challenges that school administrators face. As the need for quality school administrators reaches critical levels (Jording, 2001), this model demonstrates how the internship can be used to develop effective administrators.

Unlike student teachers, who are typically expected to be full practitioners in a classroom of students during their internship, administrative interns often receive minimal true responsibility. Many administrative interns receive no real administrative

practice at all throughout their internship, and yet upon completion of the internship they are expected to be competent administrators. Typically, administrative interns are already full time employees of the district or campus in which they are completing their internship. In addition, their supervising administrators have little or no time to devote to "training" an intern; after all, these administrators are busy running their schools. The activities in this internship are designed to maximize the administrative experience for interns without overburdening the already busy campus administrator who agrees to supervise this person.

A Standards-Based Internship

The activities in the SHSU administrative internship are based on two key sources: the Texas standards for the principal certificate (as given by the State Board for Educator Certification in Section 241.15 of the 1999 Texas Administrative Code) and the recommendations of their supervising administrator. The Texas standards for the principal certificate include learner-centered activities in the areas of values and ethics of leadership; leadership and campus culture; human resources leadership and management; communications and community relations; organizational leadership and management; curriculum planning and development; and instructional leadership and management. Figure 1 lists the Texas standards for principals.

In addition to having every internship activity correspond to a Texas principal standard, the internship at SHSU is also based upon national standards, particularly the standards for school leaders laid out by the Interstate Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). A matrix

aligning the state standards and internship activities with these national standards is given to every internship student. Figures 2 and 3 display the NCATE and ISLLC standards.

By basing the internship and its activities on state and national standards, the Department of Educational Leadership ensures that interns are receiving a quality administrative experience that is strongly grounded in both research and practice.

Internship Requirements

Activities and Reflections

As mentioned previously, every activity in the principal internship is based on and corresponds to a specific state standard for principals. Thus, the internship is almost exclusively field-based, which helps increase its effectiveness (Bass, 1990). Figure 4 demonstrates a sample activity required for each of the seven Texas principal standards. For each activity, students must write a brief summary of how they completed the activity, attach any pertinent documentation of their completion of the activity, and then write a reflection on the activity. Students must not only describe what they have learned, but they must also articulate in their reflections how they will apply this learning in a leadership role. Thus, including reflections in internship activities allows students to internalize their learning, to realize how the activity is relevant to their future role as a school administrator, and to achieve an awareness of the importance of using reflection to improve practice (Brown & Irby, 2001; Duncan, 1996). Furthermore, students who can successfully reflect on what they have learned have clearly met the goals intended by state or national standards. We emphasize reflection in our program because we have found that reflection assists in (a) assessing one's leadership impact, (b) guiding future actions, (c) developing a process for solving problems, and (d) transforming leadership.

Demographic Study

One of the initial projects required in the internship is that of a comprehensive demographic study of the intern's school district. The demographic study requires students to conduct fairly extensive research on the following areas: (1) historical background of the community and the school, (2) school and district governance, (3) district and school enrollment, (4) political and geographical characteristics of the school attendance area, and (5) background of the professional and support staff of the district and the school. For each of these areas, students must write a comprehensive report describing their findings. This project not only requires students to develop an intimate knowledge of their district and campus – important for any administrator – but it also allows them to practice writing professional quality reports concerning district and campus data. The ability to write such a report is crucial for administrators to become effective communicators with their personnel and constituents.

School Improvement Projects

Each intern is also required to complete two school improvement projects. The topic for these improvement projects can be decided by the intern and his/her cooperating administrator, with final approval of the university supervisor. The improvement projects must be a new program or strategy implemented by the intern that subsequently benefits the intern's campus. Popular topics have included parental involvement activities, high stakes testing success strategies, and school safety plans. For each improvement project, the intern must provide the following documentation: purpose, steps completed, timeline, budget, and evaluation. The school improvement projects allow the interns to experience

firsthand what it is like to implement new strategies and activities for campus-wide success and effectiveness.

Leadership Framework and Five Year Goals

All of the intern's documentation – the activities, reflections, school improvement projects, and demographic study – are all organized into a large binder. Also included in this binder are the intern's leadership framework and five year goals. The leadership framework contains seven essential components: (1) philosophy of education, (2) philosophy of leadership, (3) vision for learners, (4) vision for teachers, (5) vision for the organization, (6) vision for professional growth, and (7) method of vision attainment (Brown & Irby, 1997). Describing their responses for these components requires the interns to engage in great self-reflection. More specifically, the reflection inherent in developing a Leadership Framework assists students in (a) bringing beliefs and values to a conscious level, (b) articulating clearly beliefs and values, (c) aligning behaviors with beliefs, (d) considering and addressing critical leadership areas, (e) realizing that once they understand themselves they can better understand and work with others, (f) providing them a reference point for decision-making, whether during their practice or during their classwork, and (g) incorporating new learning into their belief system. Each of these components helps the intern become a more effective leader and administrator.

Seminars

In addition to the activities and other written components of the internship described above, interns must attend four seminars per semester of their year-long internship. The seminars allow interns to meet as small groups and discuss the internship process, their learning, their frustrations, and their evolving views of becoming an

administrator. The networking and growth involved with these seminars is tremendous. In addition, some of the seminars are dedicated to preparation for the state certification examination for principals, which interns will take at the conclusion of their internship. Preparation for the certification exam includes building an understanding of both the knowledge and the philosophical bases of this important test (Wilmore, 2002). Thus, the seminars are a critical part of the intern's final journey into completing his/her university preparation program and becoming an effective educational leader.

Conclusion

With this internship, students at SHSU become fully aware of the awesome responsibility required of school administrators. Students also find themselves leaving the internship prepared for the challenges that school administrators face. As the need for quality school administrators reaches critical levels, this model demonstrates how the internship can be used to develop effective administrators.

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Figure 1.

Texas Standards for the Principal Certificate

A principal is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students...

- by acting with integrity and fairness, and in an ethical manner *[Learner-centered values and ethics of leadership]*
- and shapes campus culture, facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community *[Learner-centered leadership and campus culture]*
- by implementing a staff evaluation and development system to improved the performance of all staff members, selects and implements appropriate models for supervision and staff development, and applies the legal requirements for personnel management *[Learner-centered human resources leadership and management]*
- by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources *[Learner-centered communications and community relations]*
- through leadership and management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment *[Learner-centered organizational leadership and management]*
- by facilitating the design and implementation of curricula and strategic plans that enhance teaching and learning; alignment of curriculum, curriculum resources, and assessment; and the use of various forms of assessment to measure student performance *[Learner-centered curriculum planning and development]*
- by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a campus culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth *[Learner-centered instructional leadership and management]*

from the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 241

Figure 2.

Standards for NCATE Accreditation

- **STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP:** The knowledge, skills and attributes to identify contexts, develop with others vision and purpose, utilize information, frame problems, exercise leadership processes to achieve common goals, and act ethically for educational communities
- **INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP:** The knowledge, skills and attributes to design with others appropriate curricula and instructional programs, to develop learner centered school cultures, to assess outcomes, to provide student personnel services, and to plan with faculty professional development activities aimed at improving instruction
- **ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP:** The knowledge, skills, and attributes to understand and improve the organization, implement operational plans, manage financial resources, and apply decentralized management processes and procedures
- **POLITICAL AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP:** The knowledge, skills, and attributes to act in accordance with legal provisions and statutory requirements, to apply regulatory standards, to develop and apply appropriate policies, to be conscious of ethical implications of policy initiatives and political actions, to relate public policy initiatives to student welfare, to understand schools as political systems, to involve citizens and service agencies, and to develop effective staff communications and public relations programs
- **INTERNSHIP:** The internship is defined as the process and product that result from the application in a workplace environment of the strategic, instructional, organizational, and contextual leadership program standards. When coupled with integrating experiences through related clinics or cohort seminars, the outcome should be a powerful synthesis of knowledge and skills useful to practicing school leaders.

Figure 3.

ISLLC Standards for School Leaders

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community
- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth
- Ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment
- Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources
- Acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context

Figure 4.

Sample Activities for the SHSU Principal Internship.

- *Learner-centered values and ethics of leadership:* Review the faculty handbook, policy manual or administrative handbook regarding child abuse, search and seizure, confidential records, drug abuse, bomb threats, security, and unauthorized personnel on the grounds.
- *Learner-centered leadership and campus culture:* Assume you are going to be principal of your campus next year. List at least two goals for the campus. Describe strategies you will use to implement the goals, including evaluation strategies. Describe how you would involve the faculty and district personnel in fulfilling your goals. If any additional budget expenditures will be necessary in the implementation phase, specify the items and estimated costs. Include time line for goal achievement.
- *Learner-centered human resources leadership and management:* Describe and critique the process used at the campus for determining the professional development needs of the staff.
- *Learner-centered communications and community relations:* Describe the district's plan for communicating with the district's patrons.
- *Learner-centered organizational leadership and management:* Secure and/or develop a comprehensive checklist for the opening and closing of a school year from the principal-teacher point of view. Critique the effectiveness of such documents.
- *Learner-centered curriculum planning and development:* Critique the process used at the campus level to assess and modify curriculum. Address how the principal employs collaborative planning processes to facilitate curriculum change.
- *Learner-centered instructional leadership and management:* Describe the principal's responsibility for monitoring the safety and welfare of the school community.

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